

Eighth Edition

Cultural Anthropology



Carol R. Ember • Melvin Ember

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CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Carol R. Ember

Hunter College of the City of New York
Human Relations Area Files



Melvin Ember

Human Relations Area Files



Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ember, Carol R.

Cultural anthropology / Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember. — 8th ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-13-346552-7 (pbk.)

1. Ethnology. I. Ember, Melvin. II. Title.

GN316.E45 1996

306—dc20

95-4831

CIP

Editorial/production supervisor: Joan E. Foley

Acquisitions editor: Nancy Roberts

Editorial assistant: Pat Naturale

Marketing manager: Kris Kleinsmith

Copy editor: Margo Quinto

Permissions specialist: Mary Helen Fitzgerald

Creative design director: Leslie Osher

Art director: Anne Bonanno Nieglos

Interior and cover designer: Donna Wickes

Illustrator: Mirella Signoretto

Cover art: Diego Rivera, "Tarascan Civilization: Dying of Fabrics," 1942.

National Palace, Mexico City, Mexico. Giraudon/Art Resource.

Photo editor: Lorinda Morris-Nantz

Photo researcher: Suzanne Skloot

Buyer: Mary Ann Gloriande



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Simon & Schuster/A Viacom Company

Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 0-13-346552-7

Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited, *London*

Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty. Limited, *Sydney*

Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., *Toronto*

Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana, S.A., *Mexico*

Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, *New Delhi*

Prentice-Hall of Japan, Inc., *Tokyo*

Simon & Schuster Asia Pte. Ltd., *Singapore*

Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil, Ltda., *Rio de Janeiro*

Preface

This edition is our biggest revision to date. In addition to updating all the chapters and responding to suggestions from reviewers, we have added new features to each chapter. The most significant one is that each chapter now has two featured boxes highlighting recent developments in the news as well as in anthropology and related disciplines. The boxes deal with three kinds of topic: current issues, research frontiers, and new perspectives on gender. We discuss the new boxes in some detail below. Then we list many of the other things that are new in each chapter. Many of the graphics in the book are new also.

As always, the book goes beyond description. We are interested not only in *what* humans were and are like; we are also interested in *why* humans are the way they are, why they got to be that way, and why they vary. When there are alternative explanations, we try to communicate the necessity to evaluate them both on logical grounds and on the basis of the available evidence. The chapter titled “Explanation and Evidence” is designed to help students distinguish between theory and evidence and to see how explanations can be and have been tested. Throughout the book, we note when the available evidence is not clear or is still lacking. We will be pleased if we succeed in helping students understand that no idea, including ideas put forward in textbooks, should be accepted simply as authority.

NEW FEATURES

Boxes in Each Chapter

“Current Issues” deal with topics students may have heard about in the news (examples: the increase in single-parent families, deforestation of the Amazon)

or topics that are currently the subject of debate in the profession (examples: science versus humanism, human rights and cultural relativity).

“Research Frontiers” include a look at researchers at work or an in-depth look at new research or a research controversy (examples: love, intimacy, and sexual jealousy; the universality of emotions expressed in masks).

“New Perspectives on Gender” involve issues pertaining to sex and gender, both in anthropology and everyday life (examples: sexism in language, separate women’s associations and women’s status and power, morality in women versus men).

Glossary Terms at the End of Each Chapter

At the end of each chapter we list the new terms that have been introduced. (These terms were identified by boldface type and defined in the text.) We deliberately do not repeat the definitions at the end of the chapter to allow students to test themselves against the definitions provided in the glossary at the end of the book.

Critical Questions at the End of Each Chapter

We also provide three or four questions at the end of each chapter that may stimulate thinking about the implications of the chapter. The questions do not ask for repetition of what is in the text; we want students to extrapolate, to imagine, beyond what we know or think we know.

HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT IS NEW IN THIS EDITION

Chapter 1 (What Is Anthropology?). We have added a new section on applied anthropology as a subfield and revised our Figure 1-1 to indicate that applied anthropology draws on people from all areas of anthropology. We have also added a new section on specialization within ethnology by region, subject matter, and theoretical orientation. Using medical anthropology as an example, we show how new specialties in ethnology are related to other subfields of anthropology as well as to other disciplines. The boxes in this chapter focus on two researchers at work, an archaeologist and an ethnologist.

Chapter 2 (The Concept of Culture). A box on human rights asks whether the Western countries are ethnocentric with regard to ideas about human rights. Our second box discusses the idea that “good” anthropology makes “the familiar strange, and the strange familiar.”

Chapter 3 (Schools of Thought). Our first box discusses how the prominence of a few women in the early years of anthropology in the U.S. probably encouraged women to enter the field in large numbers. The second box uses a research question about the Abelam of New Guinea to illustrate how different theoretical orientations suggest different types of answers.

Chapter 4 (Explanation and Evidence). The first box in this chapter explores the differences between scientific and humanistic understanding and points out that the different approaches are not really incompatible. In the second box, we have two purposes. One is to give a feeling for the experience of fieldwork; the second is to use the Mead-Freeman controversy to explore the issue of how we can know that an ethnographer was accurate. We have considerably expanded our discussion of fieldwork and participant observation in the section on ethnography. We have also added a section on within-culture comparisons.

Chapter 5 (Communication and Language). The first box deals with the problem of language extinction and what some anthropologists are doing about it. To stimulate thinking about the possible impact of language on thought, we ask in the second box whether the English language promotes sexist

thinking and we refer to new research on the subject. We have expanded and revised the sections on social status and speech and on gender differences in speech. An entirely new section is devoted to multilingualism and code-switching.

Chapter 6 (Getting Food). Many of our examples now refer to recent ethnography. For instance, we refer to recent work on the Inupiaq of Northern Alaska and the Yanomamö. And instead of describing a society as of the ethnographic present, we have added newer material where possible to show how the culture has changed. We were able to do this with the Australian aborigines, the Inupiaq, and the Lapps. We have added a section on “Market Foragers” to emphasize that most people in a modern market economy are not in fact producers of food. Our first box deals with the change in view from “Man the Hunter” to “Woman the Gatherer” and we raise the question of whether either view is accurate. Although it is commonly thought that industrialization is mainly to blame for negative developments in the environment, our second box deals with the negative effects (in preindustrial times) of irrigation, animal grazing, and overhunting.

Chapter 7 (Economic Systems). In discussing customs of land ownership we now include material about the effects of particular political and social systems (e.g., feudal and manor systems; collectives in Bulgaria), and we have added a new subsection on colonialism and natives’ control over land. In our first box we address the controversy over whether communal ownership leads to economic disaster. In the section on the conversion of resources, we have added a new subsection on types of production—domestic, elite and aristocratic, industrial, postindustrial. In discussing the distribution of resources we have expanded the section on balanced reciprocity and indicated that balances cannot be evaluated simply in economic terms, that there are other reasons to value things. In this context we have added a discussion of the distinction between gift and commodity exchanges. After we discuss commercialization, we use a box to illustrate the impact of the world-system on local economies, with special reference to the deforestation of the Amazon.

Chapter 8 (Social Stratification). In the first of the boxes in this chapter, we discuss recent changes in the United States, particularly the widening of the gap between rich and poor, and how people feel

about the changes. In our second box, we now discuss social stratification on the global level—how the gap between rich and poor countries has been widening too and what may account for that trend. In discussing caste and “race” in the United States, we now discuss how discrimination still limits social mobility among African Americans, even though many have joined the elite. Our discussion of the emergence of stratification now deals with how leaders may be able to aggrandize themselves.

Chapter 9 (*Sex, Gender, and Culture*). We now discuss how the concepts of gender do not always involve just two genders. We have revised our section on gender contributions to work, emphasizing all of the ways women contribute, and how conclusions about contributions by gender depend on how you measure “work.” In the section on gender differences in personality, we now discuss a recent reanalysis of Mead’s work on Mundugumor. In our first box, we discuss research on why women’s political participation may be increasing in some Coast Salish communities (of western Washington State and British Columbia) now that they have elected councils. A second box examines cross-cultural research about why some societies allow women to participate in combat. Finally, we have incorporated new survey results on the United States in the section on variation in sexual attitudes and practices.

Chapter 10 (*Marriage and the Family*). We have revised our discussion of the Nayar, adding new material about recent changes. We have updated our discussion of female-female marriages. With regard to the incest taboo and its extensions beyond the family, we now present evidence that marriage between groups does not necessarily increase cooperation between them, and we include a discussion of incest between commoner brothers and sisters in ancient Egypt. To introduce additional topics regarding the husband-wife relationship that are only beginning to be investigated, we have added a box on variation in love, intimacy, and sexual jealousy. We now discuss the advantages of polygyny as perceived by people in Kenya. The box in the section on family organization discusses why one-parent families are on the increase in countries like ours. We also now discuss the business advantages of nonlocalized extended families in China.

Chapter 11 (*Marital Residence and Kinship*). One of the boxes discusses the possible relationship between neolocality and adolescent rebellion. The second box is on how variation in residence and

kinship affects the lives of women. We also now discuss the effect of long-distance trade and wage labor on matrilineal residence, using the example of the Miskito in Central America.

Chapter 12 (*Associations and Interest Groups*). We now discuss changes in the functions of associations, as in Lakota military associations after contact, Filipino associations in Hawaii after many Filipinos came there, and the incorporation of regional and family associations into powerful ethnic associations in Chinatowns. We have added a section on multiethnic associations such as the women’s Wok Meri in Papua New Guinea and the Alaska Federation of Natives. We now discuss a society (Norway) in which participation in clubs is remarkably extensive, and why that may be. Our first box addresses the question of whether separate women’s associations increase women’s status and power; our second box discusses why street gangs develop and why they often become violent.

Chapter 13 (*Political Life*). We have added material on how colonialization has transformed legal systems and ways of making decisions. Our first box deals with how new local courts among the Abelam of New Guinea are allowing women to address sexual grievances. We have expanded our discussion of political process, particularly how people get to be leaders. We have added a section on “big women” on Vanatinai island, off the southeast coast of New Guinea. Our second box deals with the cross-national and cross-cultural relationship between economic development and democracy. We have added a discussion of avoidance as a peaceful mechanism of conflict resolution (in addition to negotiation and mediation). We have added a discussion of cultural patterns of violence and the use of violence as a way to resolve conflict.

Chapter 14 (*Psychology and Culture*). We have included a new discussion of probable human universals in the psychological realm. As a way of explaining cultural variation in child rearing, we now examine differences in “indulgence” of infants—how quickly parents and others feed or hold or otherwise respond to crying. In the section on explaining variation in psychological characteristics, we have added a discussion of general cultural themes, exploring different cultural concepts of the self and whether the individual or the collective is emphasized. The first box in this chapter discusses the idea that women have a different sense of themselves than men have and therefore

a different sense of morality. In our second box, which refers to a recent comparison of preschools in Japan, China, and the United States, we discuss how schools may consciously and unconsciously teach values. We now deal with the effects of school, literacy, and malnutrition on cognitive performance. Our discussion of socialization has added material on parental acceptance/rejection and the possible effects of prolonged mother-infant holding. Finally, we have updated our discussion of cross-cultural variation in mental illness.

Chapter 15 (*Religion and Magic*). One box discusses research on New England fishermen that suggests how their taboos, or “rituals of avoidance,” may be anxiety-reducing. Our second box discusses the emergence of new religions (or “cults”) and points out that nearly all of the major churches or religions in the world began as minority sects or cults. We have expanded our treatment of revitalization movements, which used to be in the chapter on culture change.

Chapter 16 (*The Arts*). In regard to how the arts change over time, we now discuss the myth that the art of “simpler” peoples is timeless, and we have added a section on changes in art as a result of European contact. We now discuss some innovative and emergent aspects of folklore, such as urban legends. We address the role of ethnocentrism in studies of art with a new section on how Western museums and art critics look at the visual art of less complex cultures. There is a box on how art varies with different kinds of political systems. In our second box, dealing with universal symbolism in art, we review recent research on the emotions displayed in masks.

Chapter 17 (*Culture Change*). To convey that much of culture change in the modern world is generated internally, one of the new boxes examines what has happened in Communist China—what has changed because of government intervention and what has persisted nevertheless. Because cultures all over the world are converging in many ways, but still exhibit many differences, another box addresses the issue of whether cultural diversity will disappear in a computerized, rapid-transit world.

Chapter 18 (*Applied Anthropology and Social Problems*). We have increased our coverage of applied anthropology in this edition. We discuss the history and types of applied anthropology in the United

States, the ethical issues involved in trying to improve people’s lives, the difficulties in evaluating whether a program is beneficial, and ways of implementing planned changes. There is a box on how anthropological work can be useful to business. To convey the process of research in applied work, our second box focuses on how researchers tried to find out why people were not availing themselves of a free antimalaria drug in Guatemala. We discuss how research may suggest possible solutions to various global social problems, including AIDS, disasters, homelessness, crime, family violence, and war.

OTHER FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Readability

We derive a lot of pleasure from trying to describe research findings, especially complicated ones, in ways that introductory students can understand. Thus, we try to minimize technical jargon, using only those terms students must know to appreciate the achievements of anthropology and to take advanced courses. We think readability is important not only because it may enhance the reader’s understanding of what we write, but also because it should make learning about anthropology more enjoyable! When new terms are introduced, which of course must happen sometimes, they are set off in boldface type and defined right away.

A Complete Glossary at the End of the Book

As we noted above, the important glossary terms to study for each chapter are highlighted (without definitions) right after the summary, so students can readily check their understanding after they have read the chapter. A complete glossary is provided at the back of the book to serve as a convenient reference for the student.

References

Because we believe firmly in the importance of evidence, we think it essential to tell our readers, both professional and student, what our conclusions are based on. Usually the basis is published research. References to the relevant studies are provided in complete notes at the end of the chapter, and a complete bibliography is also provided at the end of the book.

Summaries and Suggested Readings

In addition to the outline provided at the beginning of each chapter, there is a detailed summary at the end of the chapter that will help the student review the major concepts and findings discussed. Suggested readings are included to provide general or more extensive references on the subject matter of the chapter.

Supplements

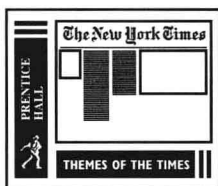
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Study Guide. This supplement for students offers chapter outlines and summaries, definitions of key concepts, self tests, and applied exercises for each chapter of the book.

JUST IN TIME: CUSTOMIZED ORIGINAL CHAPTERS FOR YOUR STUDENTS

The authors have commissioned three new series of original chapters from which instructors can choose supplemental readings to accompany this text. These new series are titled *Portraits of Culture: Ethnographic Originals*, *Research Frontiers in Anthropology*, and *Cross-Cultural Research for Social Science*. The instructor can mix and match chapters from one or more of these series. (Many of these chapters are referred to in this edition.) Please see your local Prentice Hall representative or telephone 1-800-77SOURC to receive more information about these series.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the people at Prentice Hall for various kinds of help, especially Nancy Roberts, editor-in-chief for the social sciences, Kris Kleinsmith for marketing, Joan Foley for seeing the manuscript through the production process, and Suzanne Skloot for photo research.

We are grateful to a number of people, including a few who wish to remain anonymous, for agreeing to review our chapters and make suggestions. These reviewers include: Richard Anderson, Kansas City Art Institute; C. Loring Brace, University of Michigan; Jill Brody, Louisiana State University; Daniel Brown, University of Hawaii at Hilo; Allan Burns, University of Florida, Gainesville; James G. Chadney, University of Northern Iowa; Elizabeth Chapman; John W. Cole, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Rebecca Cramer, Johnson County Community College; Dona Davis, University of South Dakota; Linda E. Duchin, Tacoma Community College; Carol M. Eastman, University of Washington; Luther P. Gerlach, University of

Minnesota; Norval Glenn, University of Texas, Austin; W. Penn Handwerker, Humboldt State University; Karen M. Hjerpe; Kevin Hunt, Indiana University; Lorena Madrigal, University of South Florida; Nancy P. McKee, Washington State University; Jon L. Olson, California State University, Los Angeles; Dennis E. Shaw, Miami-Dade Community College; Joel Sherzer, University of Texas; John Townsend, Syracuse University; Susan S. Wadley, Syracuse University; Linda Wolfe, East Carolina University.

We thank all of you, named and unnamed, who gave us advice.

Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember

About the Authors



Carol R. Ember started at Antioch College as a chemistry major. She began taking social science courses because some were required, but she soon found herself intrigued. There were lots of questions with-

out answers and she became excited about the possibility of a research career in social science. She spent a year in graduate school at Cornell studying sociology before continuing on to Harvard where she studied anthropology primarily with John and Beatrice Whiting.

For her Ph.D. dissertation she worked among the Luo of Kenya. While there she noticed that many boys were assigned "girls work," such as babysitting and household chores, because their mothers (who did most of the agriculture) did not have enough girls to help out. She decided to study the possible effects of task assignment on the social behavior of boys. Using systematic behavior observations, she compared girls, boys who did a great deal of girls' work, and boys who did little such work. She found that boys assigned girls' work were intermediate in many social behaviors, compared with the other boys and girls. Later, she did cross-cultural research on variation in marriage, family, descent groups, and war and peace, mainly in collaboration with Melvin Ember, whom she married in 1970. All of these cross-cultural studies tested theories on data for worldwide samples of societies.

From 1970 to the present, she has taught at Hunter College of the City University of New York. She has also served as President of the Society of Cross-Cultural Research and is one of the Directors of the Summer Institutes in Comparative Anthro-

pological Research which are funded by the National Science Foundation.

After graduating from Columbia College, Melvin Ember went to Yale for his Ph.D. His mentor at Yale was George Peter Murdock, an anthropologist who was instrumental in promoting cross-cultural research and building a full-text database on the cultures of the world to facilitate cross-cultural hypothesis-testing. This database came to be known as the Human Relations Area Files (it was called that because it was originally sponsored by the Institute of Human Relations at Yale). Growing in annual installments, and now distributed in electronic format, the HRAF database currently covers more than 355 cultures, past and present, all over the world.

Melvin Ember did fieldwork for his dissertation in American Samoa, where he conducted a comparison of three villages to study the effects of commercialization on political life. In addition, he did research on descent groups and how they changed with the increase of buying and selling. His cross-cultural studies focused originally on variation in marital residence and descent groups. He has also done cross-cultural research on the relationship between economic and political development, the origin and extension of the incest taboo, the causes of polygyny, and how archaeological correlates of social customs can help us draw inferences about the past.

After four years of research at the National Institute of Mental Health, he taught at Antioch College and then Hunter College of the City University of New York. He has served as President of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research and has been President since 1987 of the Human Relations Area Files, Inc., a nonprofit research agency of Yale University.

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